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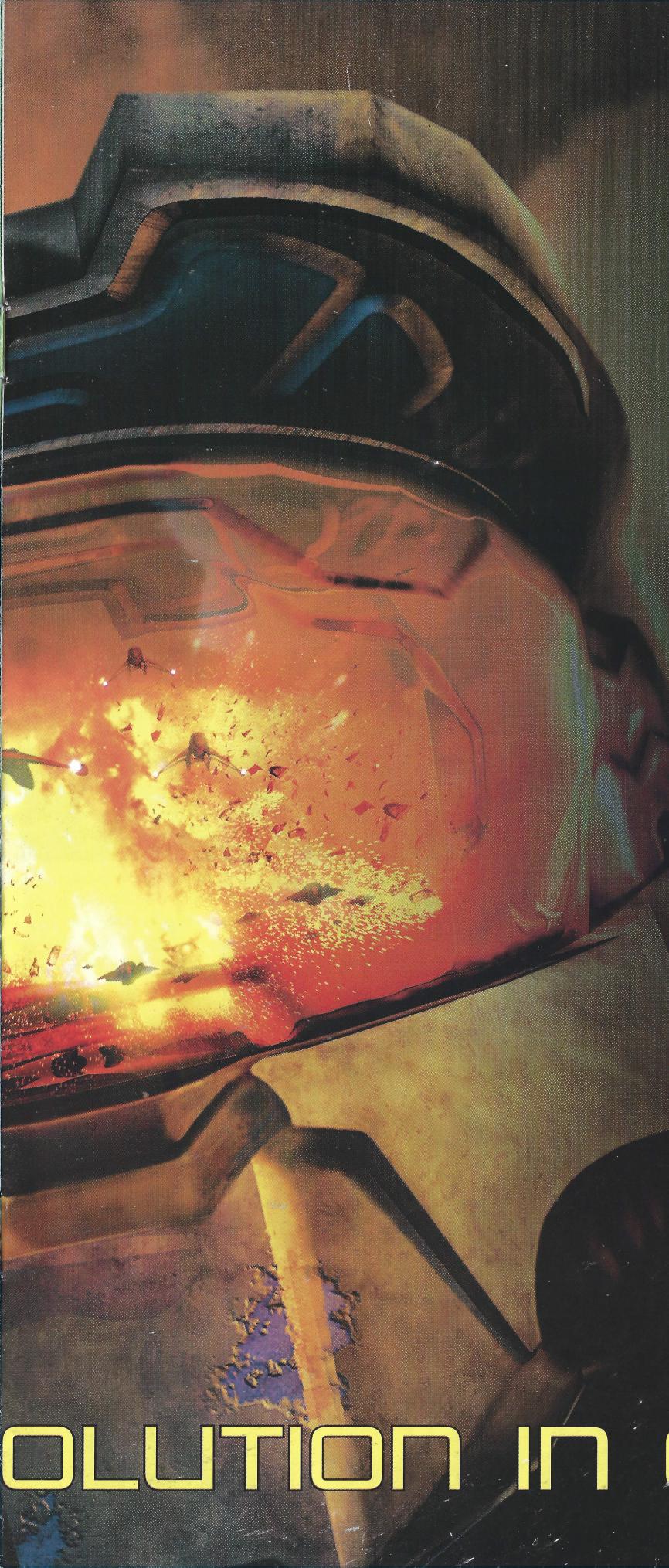
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HALO®: COMBAT EVOLVED

The original game *Halo: Combat Evolved* is the scene of some of the greatest gaming known to videogamers. Constructed by the mysterious, ancient Forerunners, and rotating slowly through space, it's the battleground on which our hero, Master Chief, takes the fight to the alien Covenant race, and in doing so uncovers the secret of Halo's purpose.

When the mothership, the *Pillar of Autumn*, is crippled by enemy fire, Captain Keyes orders it to be ditched on Halo. Now the fight turns guerrilla-style, as Master Chief – with the holographic assistance of Cortana – investigates the structures on the surface, and destroys every Covenant in his path.

So the original *Halo: Combat Evolved* (with five million copies sold) commences, and what follows is a blistering rollercoaster as the acute military acumen of Master Chief is put to its ultimate test against the ravenous hordes of Covenant enemies. As the last of the Spartans – a storied outfit of ultimate warriors – Master Chief is the last true hope of stopping the Covenant dead in their rampaging path through the galaxy.

SECRETS OF HALO

Armed with supplies from dropships, or by scavenging the weapons of his defeated enemies, Master Chief cut a swathe through the Covenant forces. Fighting alongside compatriots as they manned the turret guns of a Warthog or used their military training to flank and attack Covenant enclaves, he plunged deeper and deeper into the mysteries of Halo.

Several buildings packed with arcane machinery house Covenant Grunts and their Elite taskmasters, along with lumbering Hunters that belie their size and cumbersome build by charging at the Chief with thundering force.

Hurtling across the rolling terrain, with Master Chief driving the agile Warthog over hill and vale, new locations open up that need investigating if Earth's forces are to discover the purpose of Halo.

Eventually, Cortana is able to log into Halo's network and uncover the truth: Halo is a weapon.

Against what?

EVOLUTION IN COMBAT

WHO IS MASTER CHIEF?

As the last of the elite military outfit known as the Spartans, Master Chief is a powerful but little understood hero. His real identity is Spartan 117, but he is known simply as John.



MEMORABLE MOMENTS

The first encounter with the shambling, unceasingly aggressive Flood is one of the standout moments in videogame history. As these ominous creatures drop from tunnels and emerge around every corner, Master Chief's task suddenly takes on a more terrifying bent than the threat of the Covenant alone.

As a weapon, Halo was designed to destroy all life that could sustain The Flood – human and Covenant alike.

Worse yet, a floating blue orb – 343 Guilty Spark – is trying to use the Chief, or anyone else, to activate Halo. This odd entity appears to be a guardian of sorts, left by the Forerunners after they constructed the device, and in an eternity of monitoring the place has become its historian.

A critical decision needs to be made – and that's to destroy Halo to prevent it from activating and

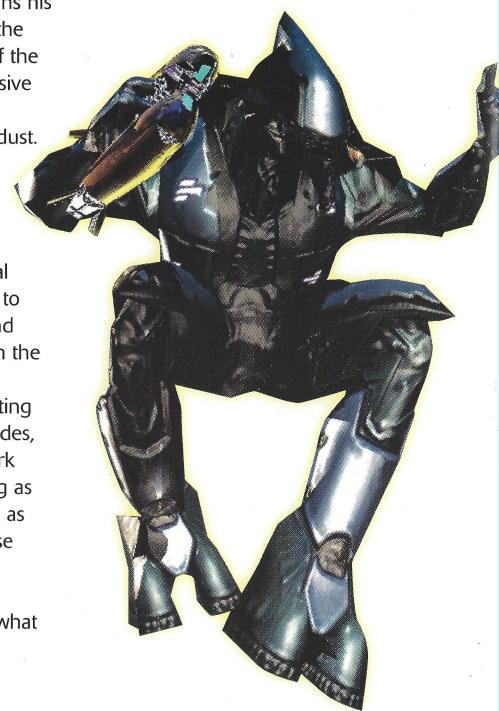
thereby obliterating all life in the galaxy. So Master Chief begins his run to the finish line, to use the superheated unstable core of the *Pillar of Autumn* as the explosive reaction required to turn this incredible device into space dust.

Culminating in an action sequence that's a genuine contender for the best ending of any game, the Chief's pedal-to-the-metal race to escape as Halo starts to disintegrate is a thrill-a-second moment that in itself is worth the price of admission.

And so, job done, catapulting through space as Halo explodes, the blue speck of Guilty Spark pops out of the ether, leaving as many questions unanswered as have been explained by these destructive events.

What does that mean?

You simply can't wait for what *Halo 2* brings, right?



HALO 2: A WHOLE NEW SHOOTING MATCH

So what, Master Chief, do you know at this stage? You know that the Covenant are still on the rampage. You know that 343 Guilty Spark still has some role to play. So what will become of Earth?

Earth?

Oh yes – *Halo 2* brings the world-shattering action close to home as the Covenant invade our precious green-blue planet.

And they're organized. Doing the dirty work on the ground, keeping Earth's remaining forces occupied and low on ammo, are the Grunts. Even these stalwarts of the invading force can cause terminal mischief, employing flanking maneuvers as they waddle into position to do damage, or lead the retreat and bring more ominous reinforcements.

Alongside the sneaky Jackals are Elites – the most fearsome and battle-tested of the Covenant armada – as well as Brutes, who are even larger and pack just as much firepower.

Supreme leaders of these troops are enemies never-before-seen in *Halo* – the Prophets. Though they're completely mysterious, we know that they are the brains of the Covenant operation. (And if you read the *Halo* novels – available in bookstores for \$6.99 each – you'll have a head-start in understanding their role.)

What's got to be worrying to Master Chief in facing a revitalized foe threatening his home planet is that it appears they've learned something from their earlier encounter. Deadly accuracy with a pistol proved an invaluable tool in the Spartan's armory as he capped enemies in the head from a safe distance, seriously injuring or outright killing them in a single shot. The towering, powerful Brutes wear tougher head armor that's more effective against such sneaky – yet effective – attacks; it seems that the enemy has done its homework and is now out in bigger force and better-prepared.

BRINGING THE FIREPOWER

So how can Master Chief counter this improved threat? By lifting his own game – in this case, using the option to grab a weapon in his other hand. When he's dual-wielding a couple of submachine guns, or even weapons dropped by the Covenant, unarmored enemies will fall much faster as they're pounded by the left- and right-triggers pumping ammo into their carcasses.

Need to lob a grenade at an oncoming rush of enemies? The Chief will have to drop a weapon, throw the grenade, and grab the weapon back – all adding to the tension of every combat encounter, and requiring quick moves and smarter thinking about how to approach each situation.

In addition to a new Battle Rifle, Master Chief will also get his hands on some new weaponry, including some of the bad guys'. Just wait 'til you get your hands on the Covenant Energy Sword. In the expert hands of the Chief, this pulsating blue blade can jab with one button-press, uppercut with impressive effect using the right-trigger, or – when a target is locked in – unleash an absolutely devastating one-lunge kill stroke via the right-trigger.

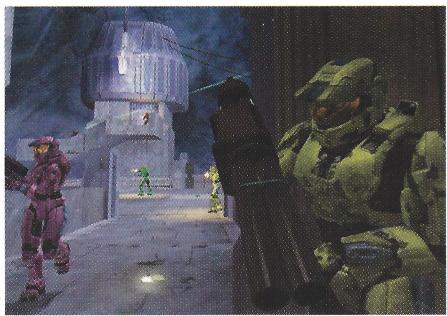
And it's waiting for the Chief to come try it out for size!

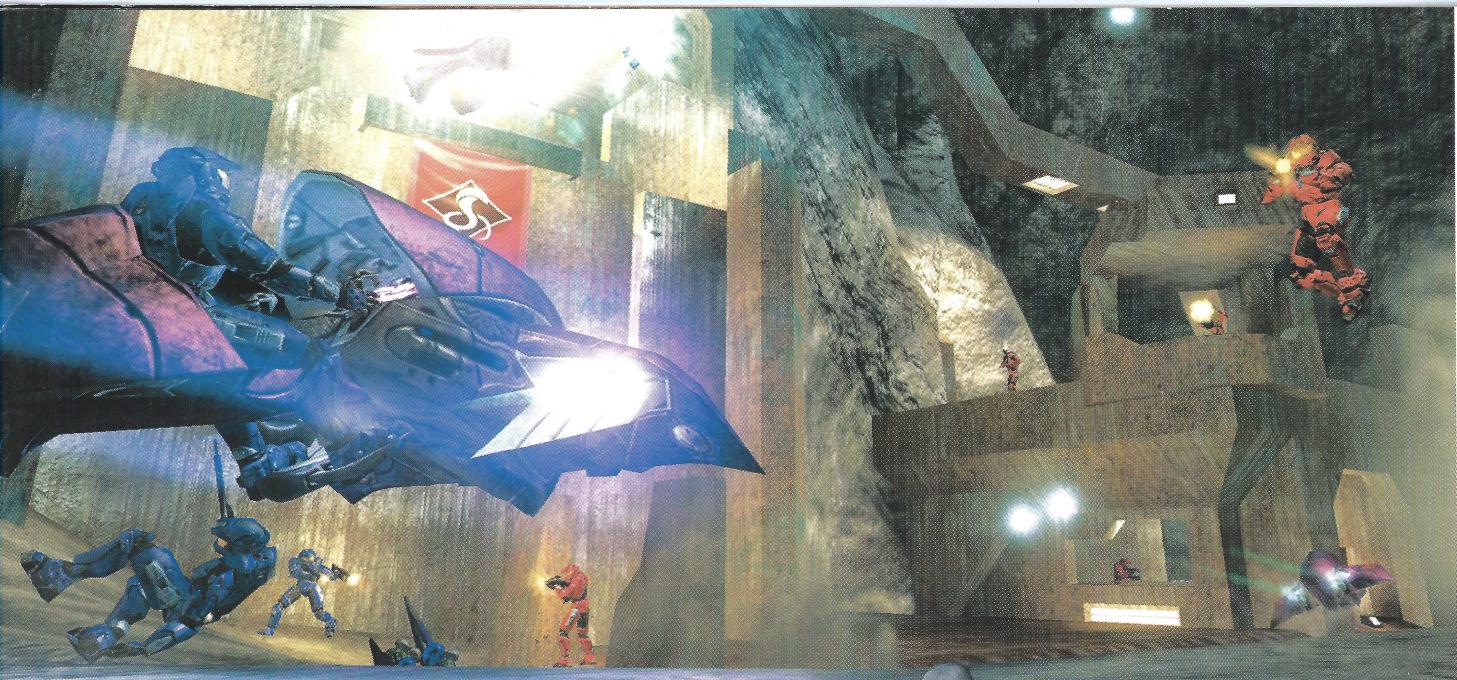
DRIVEN TO THE EDGE

Getting around invasion-ravaged Earth will mean covering a vast swathe of land. Fortunately for Master Chief, his squadmates can now drive different vehicles, letting him get to the fun stuff – jumping into the gun turret seat and dispensing his own brand of alien removal on any creature that gets in his way.

Veterans of the original *Halo* will be instantly familiar with the Warthog, although on Earth you might find models sporting a rocket launcher on the back, rather than the machinegun.

Getting precision control over its movement will be critical, so use of the emergency brake lets you glide expertly around





corners or stop fast enough to avoid vehicular disaster.

Several vehicles that Master Chief didn't have access to while on *Halo* are in what remains of Earth's defensive arsenal, but if a vehicle's not immediately unoccupied, you're packing an incredible new skill.

As a Covenant-manned Ghost comes sweeping down on your position, with deft timing you can sweep to the side of it as it slows and board it while it's moving, kicking the incumbent pilot from its seat. What a rush!

Now you need to get motoring in case the enemy pulls the same incredible trick on you. And for that extra bit of velocity, the Ghost is also equipped with a new speed boost that's great for getting out of a tight corners, but renders your weapons inoperative. Every move is a balance of strategy, requiring

thought and planning, alongside a fast trigger-finger and keen aim.

DELIVERING DETAILS

Dust particles swirl into the air, whipped by a vehicle's motion; sunlight glints off the hide of the Elites and your squadmates' visors; and every vista is etched with incredible precision. But you have to remain focused and not just gawk in awe at the splendor of the detail in every environment.

Fire at an incoming vehicle, and you'll see chips fly off it, and then great chunks of metal, leaving sparking wires where once was a wing. This battlefield is alive and electric, and as you're gunning for enemy vehicles to board for your own use, the Covenant will bring their own tactics.

You'll man gun turrets, work with a team, and sneak through buildings using your ears as much as your eyes as sounds resonate with great accuracy, alerting you to possible dangers. Other marines will bark orders, medics will attend the wounded, and as you're pinned by enemy gun emplacements, soldiers calling down mortar strikes will show that they're not ready to concede Earth to the Covenant just yet.

What other turns this epic story takes, you'll have to uncover for yourself. The Covenant have brought the fight right to our doorstep, and you'll be stepping into the shoes of Master Chief to ensure that the door is slammed firmly in their alien faces.



MASTERFUL MULTIPLAYER

Friends have been made, groups formed, and organized tournaments contested with the original *Halo*'s multiplayer options. These opportunities are merely the tip of the iceberg as *Halo 2* introduces new multiplayer maps packed with new gameplay dynamics, and all now playable over *Xbox Live*.

If you're not yet a member of *Xbox Live*, you still have time to rectify that situation so that you can get involved with the *Halo 2* community. Showcasing some of the latest *Xbox Live* features, *Halo 2* will support clans, letting you create and manage your own organizations, complete with identifying insignia so that you can make a name for yourselves against other members bringing their best game online.

Not only does *Xbox Live* support mean that you'll have a ready community of players available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to play with and against; it also means that the whole multiplayer experience will be ramped up with the new gameplay features.

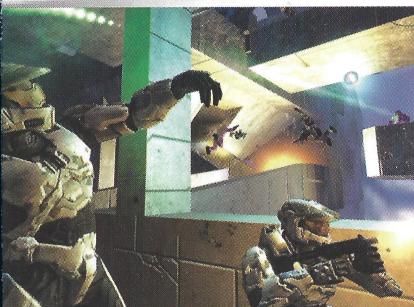
Interactive environments in some maps will add tremendous strategy to your team's offensive and defensive plans. Destructible items such as fusion cores can be shot at to take out nearby enemies. Switches will open doors and instantly change the focus of a defensive team as it tries to plug the holes while attackers make headway toward the flag.

Playing as a Spartan or even as a Covenant Elite, you'll be able to bring your dual-wielding skills online and show your agility by boarding another player's ride! What could be sweeter than that?

These are just a few of the gameplay features witnessed so far on just a single multiplayer map. Imagine what's in store with the multitude of other maps being prepped and tested to offer the most compelling multiplayer experience you can imagine.

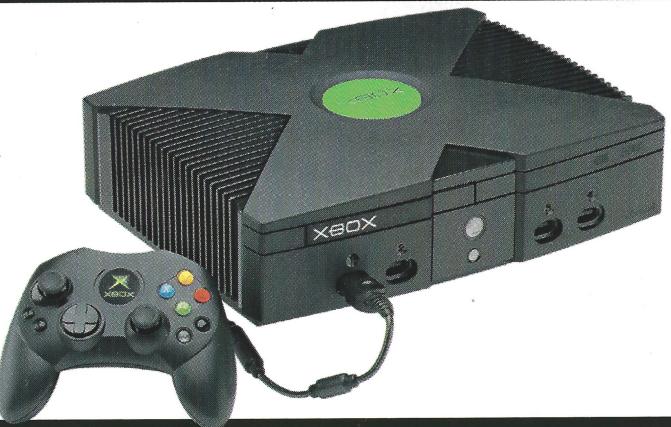
With System Link and *Xbox Live* gameplay, support for up to 16-player games, and stats and forums through the Bungie.net web site, *Halo 2* will redefine multiplayer gaming and the creation of vibrant clans and communities.

Who doesn't want to be a part of that? So make sure you're on *Xbox Live*, and be prepared for the ultimate *Xbox* gaming experience.



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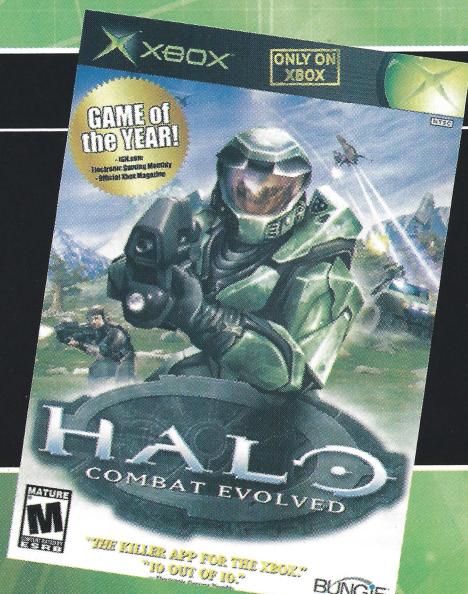
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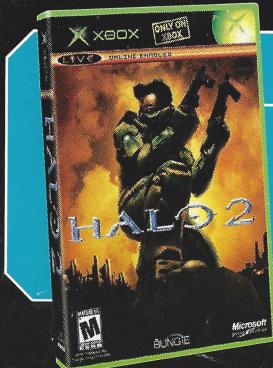
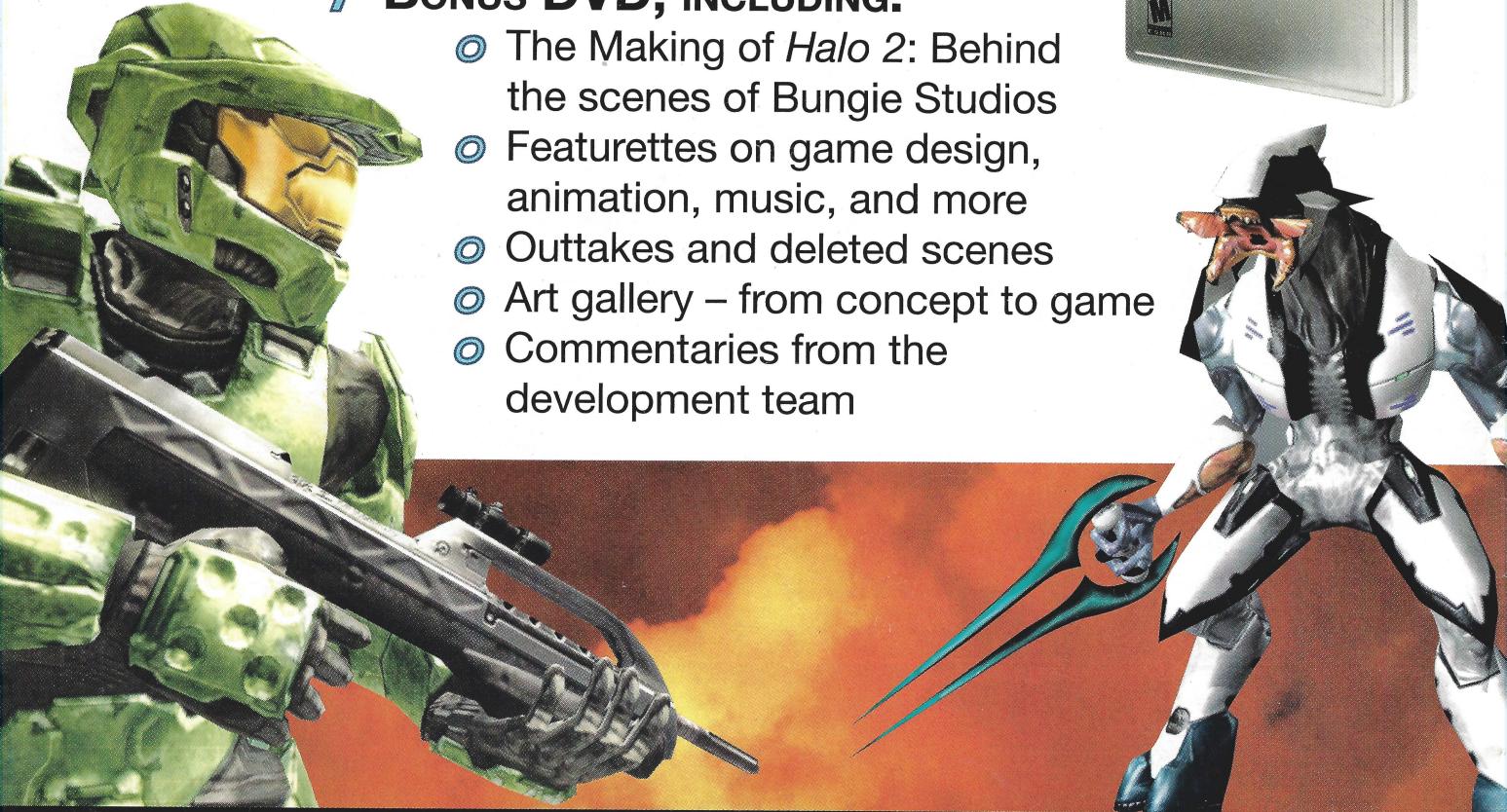
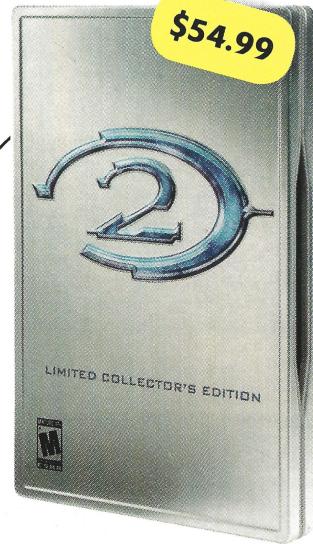
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